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EDITORIAL

Rather more heat than light has been generated by the discussion in the newspapers of the announcement that Teachers College will establish an experimental "modern" school. This unfortunate condition is due, of course, partly to the fact that the idea originated with the General Education Board and was first given expression by Abraham Flexner in a sharply critical pamphlet called *The Modern School*, and partly to the radical curtailment of mathematics and the omission of Latin and Greek which are provided for in the new curriculum. The vast majority of laymen, to say nothing of teachers, still think of education in terms of a vague general discipline of the mind to be obtained by dogged application to certain studies with small intrinsic value but great reputed efficacy in sharpening the wits. As one of the ardent apologists for the existing order declared in public recently, they firmly believe that the best way to learn to do a thing is to do something entirely different.

The question at issue is a far-reaching one, worthy of the excitement which it is arousing, for "discipline" is the cornerstone of the traditional secondary-school program. Let it once be demonstrated that more and better growth is possible through studies intrinsically valuable in the work and play of life than through certain of the admittedly "formal" studies, and reorganization will be demanded at once. The citation of classical authorities will surely grow less popular and less convincing, and a general shifting of opinion as to "what knowledge is of most worth" will take place.

In advance of exact information as to the plans of Director Caldwell and his associates it is obviously the part of wisdom to withhold judgment. It may fairly be assumed that a trained scientist will go about his task with care and discretion. The pupils who apply for admission to the school will know in advance

just what opportunities are open to them. The results of the class activities will be evaluated in every way possible, and no conclusions will be reached until ample data are in hand. The co-operation of Teachers College is sufficient guaranty that abundant and searching criticism will be brought to bear upon every phase of the work.

Why then the great furor? Is school experience the only sort that must not be subjected to scientific investigation? Are we committed to the policy of making progress in education only by the trial and error of each individual? Are some pedagogical dogmas too sacred to be questioned? The unrestrained violence of the protestants injures their cause; it suggests to the bystander the presence of a fear that the new hypotheses may actually prove true.

A sane attitude toward the classics would seem to be that assumed by President Benjamin Ide Wheeler in an address on "The Social Need of Greek" delivered at the University of Chicago some years ago. There will always be the necessity, he said, for some of our number to study the Greek language in order to interpret to us the Greek civilization. Such persons must evidently make this study their life-work. A sufficient number at present are doing this. In all probability Latin will come to occupy the same status. If so, the study of English and of the other humanities must be ever better organized so as to maintain a balance of interests in the curriculum. As for mathematics, it is conceivable that the development of work in applied science may more than compensate for the giving up of a part of algebra and geometry except in the case of prospective engineers.

The point is that an exhibition of cocksure intolerance of experiment in education is particularly unhappy at this time. There is not one chance in a thousand that our school courses will remain unchanged year after year while a rapid transformation of our social and industrial life is everywhere apparent. Under the circumstances investigation, controlled experience, is infinitely better than waves of sentiment. And those who let their personal predilections cause them to cry out against it are but giving support and comfort to the enemy.